

Free for All: Saturdays at PCA or any time at home!

By ROBERTA LAVADOUR

Each Saturday for the past eight years, kids have gathered in the painting studio at the Pendleton Center for the Arts to make art. The free class, aptly named FREE for All, starts at 9:30 a.m. and runs 45 minutes. The only requirement is a sense of adventure.

Since there's no need to sign up ahead of time, busy families can decide on the fly whether to drop in, depending on who's out of bed and who doesn't have a baseball game that morning. Some families bring visiting grandparents along, and some parents use the class to rack up major brownie points, rounding up the little ones so their spouse can have an hour of uninterrupted time at home. The projects incorporate everything from air-dry clay to watercolor to crepe paper, but many involve plain old paper and pens or markers.

Can't make it to class this Saturday? Not to worry. There are plenty of ways to engage your kids in creative play with a few simple materials from around the house. We've collected a few quick and easy projects that you can do right at the kitchen table. If you keep a small stash of blank paper, scissors, a few markers and a glue stick on hand, kids can jump in to a project anytime.

Trash to treasure collage

One of the most unexpected places to find beautiful paper is inside your monthly bills. When turned inside out, the security en-



Saturday Free for All participants show off their "matching half" artwork.

velopes that most large companies use become a treasure trove of lines and squiggles. The variation will surprise you. Carefully pull the flaps up to disassemble the envelope. Cut out shapes and glue them into a fun composition, then draw over the top with a marker to bring the collage to life.

Find your creative side

Find a picture in a catalogue or magazine that has two halves. Large faces work well, as do photos of flowers, insects and landscapes. Carefully remove the page (sometimes that's harder than it seems) – a utility knife, used by a grown-up, can come in handy. Cut the picture in two, then glue one side to a larger sheet of paper, leaving room for you to draw the miss-

ing half. You can try to match the image as closely as you can or let your imagination run wild to create something totally new. It's fun to give a friend the other half, then compare your artwork when you're done.

Accidental poetry

Find some words that you really like in an old catalogue or magazine and glue them on a page. Now find some other words that connect the first ones into a sentence or a little poem. It doesn't have to rhyme! Now draw a picture inspired by the words.

Be ready to be creative!

- Devote a small drawer or box to art supplies. When you encounter a page in a magazine or an unusual collage material that inspires you, pop it in the box.
- Look for cheap or free art-making materials. Yard sales are great places to find markers and crayons, and businesses sometimes give away pens with their logo on them for free. An old cereal box or an old birthday card can be disassembled and become the perfect canvas for new artwork.
- Ask for paper instead of plastic at the grocery store. Brown paper bags are great for all sorts of projects, including simple drawings.
- Don't forget to look outside. Sticks, flowers, leaves and tiny pebbles can be turned into fun and colorful artwork. You'll have to experiment with attaching different materials to a backing, and they might fade and wilt, but the experience of making something fun is always time well spent.

Roberta Lavadour is Executive Director of the Pendleton Center for the Arts at www.pendletonarts.org.